THE PRISM

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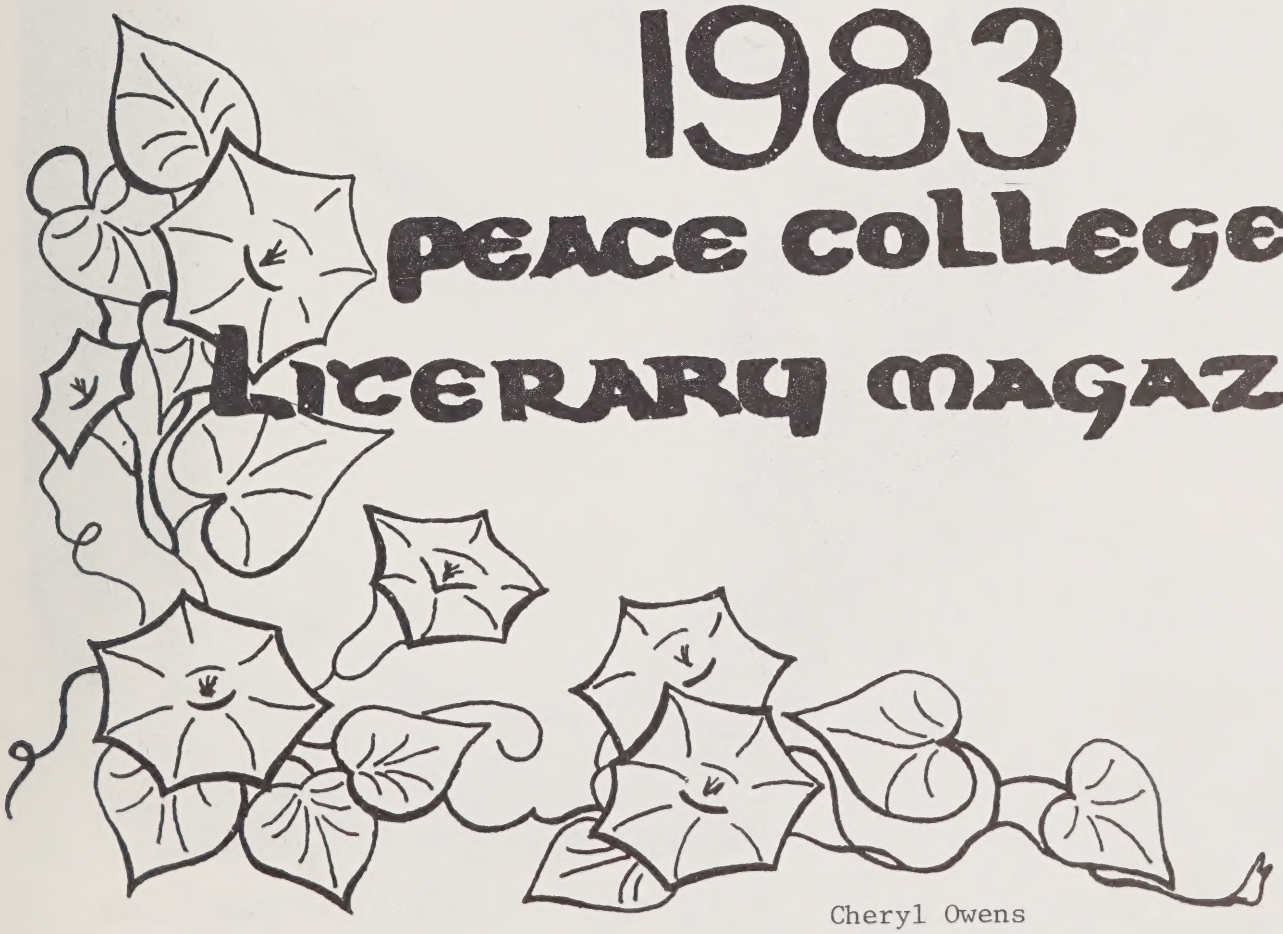
PRISM

1983

PEACE COLLEGE

LITERARY MAGAZINE



Cheryl Owens

Pamela Sams

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BRIDAL SHOWER
(WEDGEWOOD)

i put the last of the clanking dishes
into the box
thinking how angry they always sound now
no matter what my mood.
i suppose they have a right to their
ornery disposition after
thirty-two
years of marriage
and four kids.

the first few years
those dishes
tinkling like wind chimes
shining bright and clear
first thing in the morning
like his smiling eyes.

my heart broke the first time
he dropped a saucer,
its wounded blue slivers
lying irreparably shattered on the
new linoleum.
next it was a bowl
followed by a cup
and two plates,
his careless hands destroying our
fragile beginnings,
with well-meaning promises to replace
that which could never be regained.

several chipped serving pieces later
the children all left home
it was the three of us again:
he
the battered china
and i.
the sounds of the angry dishes
clashed
through our silence
until the china splinters fell
like
acid rain
leaving me with a place-setting
for only
one.

Jane Bryson Booth

REVERSAL

It's been two years since we were college freshmen,
We finally manage to spend a Sunday afternoon together.
Both of us complain about busy days and long night hours:
While she is changing classes,
I am changing diapers.

I am eager to share everything about my baby boy:
"Let me tell you what little Matt did last week...."
"Really," she replies; her eyes pretend interest.

"He's cutting two new teeth," I boast.
She thinks that's nice and talks about cutting classes.

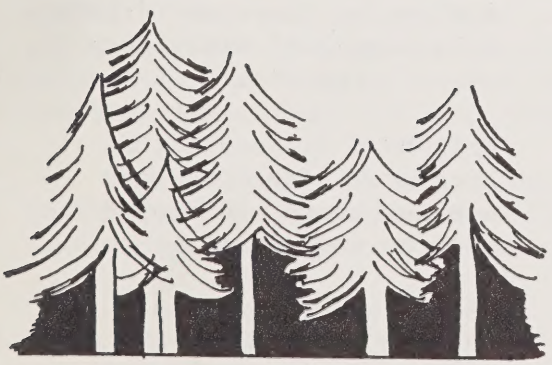
"I can say at last he's on a good schedule!"
Her schedule is great too, she's out by twelve on
Fridays.

I proudly show his latest picture; he's
wearing his new navy-blue sailor suit.
Her response: a noncommittal smile,
Which brightens as she describes her handsome religion
teacher.

We part - I, having to go home to fix Matt's formula;
She, having to study formulas for a Chemistry test.

Three years pass,
I visit her again with anticipation,
Eager to reveal my good news.
"Next Tuesday I'm returning to school!"
"Really," she says,
"Next Tuesday our baby is due!"

Kay Davis



WOMANHOOD

The forest creeps,
the forest crawls
in darkness of day
and...
if I walk alone
clad only in womanhood
what should I encounter?
the human beast
a civilized thing
carries the slime of generations
in the lie
the forest creeps, the forest crawls
and...
if I am alone
unmanly in the wood
would I survive?

Roberta Mothershead

GENTLENESS

downy
white
clouds
drifting
leisurely
in a
brilliant
blue
sky

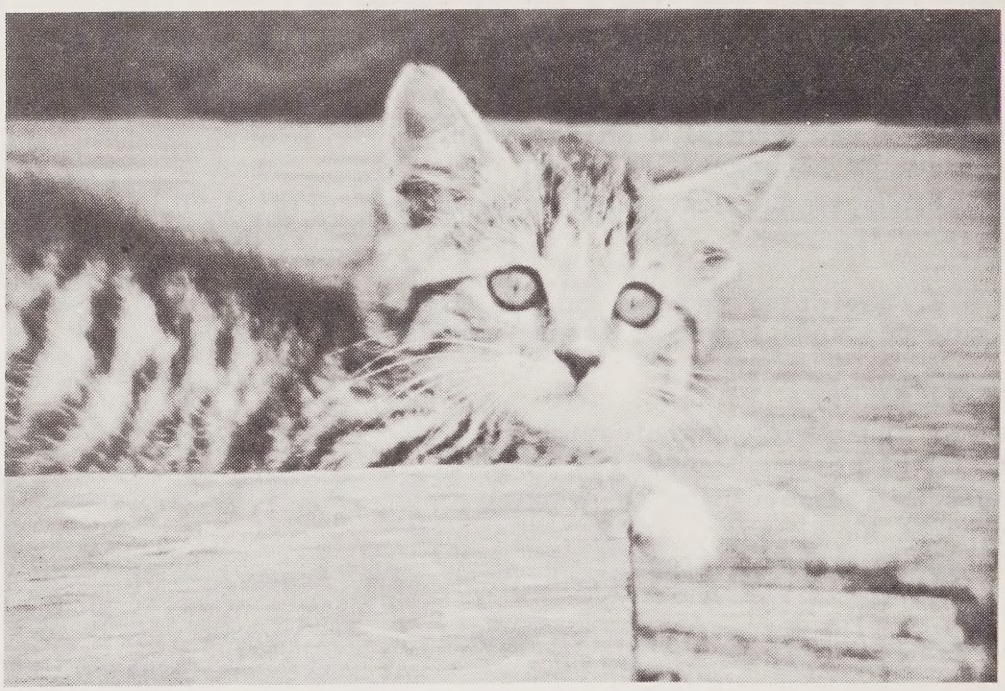
the
swell
of
the
sea
on
a
calm
summer's
eve

the
savory
fragrance
of
freshly
baked
home-made
bread

the
hint
of
cotton
candy
fluff
fading
in
your
mouth

someone's
fingers
lightly
scratching
your
back

Ashley Leister



Cheryl Owens

VELVET BROWNS

Like dark pools of brown velvet;
Staring black.
Sparks of gold,
Highlight their passion.

Like mirrored images-reflecting,
Magically pulling me in.
Their tranquil waters
Encompassing my thoughts.

Like Velvet Browns,
They softly caress.
Forever-
Keeping me warm.

Beth Saleeby

Life is a whirlwind
scattering hopes and dreams
down a path of misty grey
reality.

Childhood illusions that
once grew ripe and green
are now brown and wisped
away by the wind.

They cover the ground
only to be trampled on, or to be
tossed about once more to
the tune of the wind's
echoing laughter.

Joy Shell

ROCKING CHAIR

For hours at a time, he just sat there, staring at the children as they played in the fields. Softball, hide-and-seek, football, and games of make-believe captivated the children and occupied their days. There were eight, or maybe ten, or maybe more, depending on the weather. They always played in the dusty field, because it made a good park, out in the desolate country, with nothing else around. It was the only field with no crops growing in it. All of the other farmers had healthy, sturdy crops of soybeans, corn, or tobacco. This field had dirt--and children. Tanned children running around in dirty bare feet.

He didn't mind their playing in the field. It was his front yard. They played there every day of the summer.

And they weren't afraid of him either. Sure, the children had heard the rumors about Old Man Connor. Most people had, and thought he was crazy. His wife died, you know, and he couldn't handle it. He let the farm go down and the house go with it, too. Billy Coltrain doesn't even mow the grass out back anymore. He hasn't mowed it for about two years now. He used to mow it every week in the summer when Mrs. Connor was alive. She paid him a dollar a week. He kept mowing it the summer after she died, too. His father paid him though. Old Man Connor never even knew that he didn't pay Billy. He always talked to him, but never mentioned any money. He didn't have much anyway, probably lost his bankbook. They used to have enough to get by pretty well; but not anymore.

Mrs. Thelma Connor was a pretty little thing. She died about three years ago, in October I think it was. She was tiny and always sickly--real nice though. It's a shame they never could have children; they both wanted a child, real bad. Thelma did get pregnant once, but that baby was born dead. Talk had it that the doctor told her not to get pregnant again or it would be bad for her. He said she might die if she had a baby. They probably should have adopted one, but were too stubborn to do it. They wanted their own, you know. They had bought a crib and Thelma had made some clothes for the baby that died. Mr. Connor was so excited, he couldn't sit still for nine months. If it was a girl, they were going to name her Faye, and if it had been a boy, it's name was going to be Gene Connor. It was a girl, but she never got to use her new name. I'd never seen two people so heartbroken in my life as when that baby was born dead. The only thing that got them through it was each other.

And now there he was, silhouetted against the weathered boards, rocking in that old chair which was still spotted with chips of white paint. He was dressed in khaki pants, as usual, and an old green cotton shirt. He had on

work boots, too. He always wore work boots, although he never worked a day after Thelma died. He had his cane beside him, laid on the rotten boards of the porch, from which the paint was long gone. He was watching the children, mumbling to himself, and working on his whittling again. He used to whittle something all the time. It kept his hands busy, I suppose. His white hair was getting thin. He still shaved his tan face every morning, because Mrs. Connor never liked beards. He cleaned his nails every day too, and kept them short. She always insisted on that. Anyhow, he never got them dirty, since he stopped working in the field; he just cleaned them mostly out of habit.

The children were playing stickball in his front yard. He sat patiently, rocking, and watching the children. His gaze was intent on Katherine Blackwell, who was about eight years old, with blonde pigtails that flop in the breeze. She was dressed in pink, as usual. Her mother always dressed her in pink, or yellow, or some bright color.

He watched Katherine every day. She played in his yard every day, with the other children. She was always there, in her bright, ruffly, little-girl dresses. To Mr. Connor, she was perfect.

He turned his attention toward the front door and shouted into the empty house. "Thelma, don't you think we'd better get Faye in and cleaned up for supper? She's been playing for a long time now." He spoke into the silence of his porch, with no one to return his comments. "Thelma, did you make that dress that Faye has on? It sure is pretty. She looks so much like you when she wears it. She's such a pretty baby. Do you need some help with dinner? I'll come in directly."

The boy on home plate caught Mr. Connor's eyes and held his gaze momentarily. Mr. Connor lifted his tired and tanned hand and waved, his smile breaking the tenseness, and telling the children, without words, that they could still play. And they did.

Arthur McCall, the mailman, embarked on the journey down the long driveway. He always brought Mr. Connor's mail to him when he was sitting on the front porch. Mr. Connor immediately recognized the well-worn medium grey uniform and threw his hand in the air for a friendly wave.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Connor," called Arthur. "I brought you a package from your sister-in-law today."

Mr. Connor nodded his head in a silent acknowledgement of the gift. The package was no surprise. He got one every year from them. He would open the box to find a thick flannel shirt, just like last years; and the one before that. He liked flannel a lot, but she always sent the wrong size and it was too much trouble to exchange them.

Arthur stepped on the porch step with his cherrier - than - usual smile. He had a light tan, but not as dark as that of the farmers in the area. Arthur's deep brown eyes seemed to smile themselves as he greeted Mr. Connor.

"It's good to see you again. Here's your package."

Arthur placed the package on Mr. Connor's lap so he wouldn't have to get up out of the rocking chair. "Go ahead and open it up, let's see what it is."

Mr. Connor fumbled the tape with his frail fingers, trying to open the package.

"It'll be another shirt, Arthur. They send one every year. Can you give me a little help with this tape?"

Arthur bent down to help Mr. Connor open the package, opening each piece of tape slowly to allow Mr. Connor the opportunity to regain control of the event if he so chose. With the brown paper finally removed, a white box came into view. Mr. Connor smiled and opened the lid. "Nice shirt, isn't it Arthur?" He lifted it out of the box, but didn't remove the cellophane.

"Yes sir, that's a fine shirt. It'll keep you real warm this fall. I've been planning to buy one with all those yellows and greens in it for myself. Yes sir, that's a nice shirt allright. What does the card say?"

Mr. Connor lifted the tan envelope and pulled out the card which had a mallard on the front. "Thinking about you. Love, Sarah and Les. Awful nice of them, wasn't it, Arthur?"

"Yes sir, it certainly was. Do you want me to throw this paper away for you?"

"That would be mighty kind of you, Arthur." Arthur picked up the brown paper and walked into the wooden house, letting the screen door bang shut behind him. Mr. Connor returned the shirt to the box and placed the card on the side. His feeble hand rested on top of the cellophane, his gaze intent on the children in the yard. The screen door banging once again against the time-hardened wooden house directed Mr. Connor's gaze to Arthur.

"Would you do one more thing for me while you're here, Arthur?"

"Yes sir, what's that?" He walked closer to Mr. Connor to receive his instructions. Mr. Connor grasped the box with his right hand and held it in the air.

"Would you put this on the chest of drawers for me? I have some other things stacked up there and you can just set this on top of them if you will."

"Yes sir, I'll be glad to." Arthur grabbed the box and once again walked inside. He went through the den and into the bedroom, which was dark, as a result of the drawn shades. The windows faced the front yard, for the bedroom was beside the porch, yet one could not catch a glimpse of the children in the field. Arthur put the package on top of the three other flannel shirts. They were all similiar, the only variation being in

the color. They obviously had been stacked there every year, when he delivered one to Mr. Connor. The bed was made immaculately, without a single wrinkle in the quilt on the bed, and the other quilt neatly folded at the foot of the bed. The hardwood floor was losing the paint and several braided rugs randomly covered it. Arthur turned and quickly left the bedroom. He opened the screen door, and this time caught it with his hand to prevent the bang. "I put it there for you, Mr. Connor. Why don't you wear those shirts? Don't you like them?"

"Oh, I like them just fine, but they don't fit. Is Thelma in there cooking supper? I ought to go in and help her out."

Arthur tensed his fists, and drove his hands deep into his pockets. "Well, Mr. Connor, I didn't walk into the kitchen, just the bedroom."

"Oh, I see. I need to show her that shirt. Sarah is her sister, you know."

"Yes sir, I know. Did the ladies from the church bring that ham over on Tuesday?"

Mr. Conner looked into Arthur's eyes, and then to the children in the field. He waited a few moments before responding. "Yeah, they brought it by. Awfully nice of those ladies to do that for me. I can't cook for myself, you know, and I don't have any kids to do it for me. It's good ham. Do you want to stay and eat some with me?"

"Well, I'd like to, but I can't. I just want to make sure things are going along okay for you."

Mr. Connor looked out in the field with a distant gaze in his eyes. He raised his hand and pointed to Katherine. "Look at Faye out there. Did you ever see a prettier child? She's so happy. Would you tell her to come on in after a while and get washed up for supper?"

Arthur looked down on Mr. Connor in the rocking chair, his eyes set intently on the child with blonde pigtails and dressed in pink. He patted Mr. Connor's hand gently. "Yes sir, I'll tell her." He shook his head solemnly. "Take care of yourself and I'll see you on Monday."

Arthur walked silently back down the drive, shaking his head. He waved to Katherine and the other children, who were putting away their toys and going home for supper.

Mr. Connor reached to his right side and picked up the old rickety cane. He walked to the tattered screen door and looked inside. Thelma was gone again, he thought. He walked inside the house and let the screen door bang shut behind him. Stoping on the braided rug inside the door, Mr. Connor held onto the doorknob in order to regain his balance. The sun streamed in through the white and yellow gingham curtains. The sink lay nestled between the thick wooden chopping block and the old gas stove. There was one pot on the stove, a dark blue enameled one with white dots. The pot was empty, as usual, except when it served to reheat stew that the ladies' group from

the church brought by. It used to hold fresh vegetables straight from the garden, that Thelma would cook all morning long until the aroma filled the kitchen, tantalizing Mr. Connor until she called him in for lunch.

Mr. Connor regained his balance and slowly walked to the cupboard. He picked up the silver fork, spoon, and knife and placed them on the table, beside his china plate. Thelma had bought the plates for Christmas entertaining the year before she died. It sure was a pretty plate, sitting beside the blue chipped glass. All of the other china was gone now. He cut some ham, found a slice of bread in the breadbox, poured himself some water and sat down to his supper.

After indulging in his meal, he dutifully washed his plate, glass, and utensils. A dirty house is a devil's house, Thelma used to say.

He washed his hands in the white bathroom sink--white, that is, except for the rust stain streaking down the back of it. The sink hadn't been cleaned in years. His slippered feet moved slowly across the green tile floor and headed towards the bedroom. He covered his old, frail body in the quilt that Thelma had made. Although it was the middle of the summer, he always got chilly at night, and even the brightly colored patchwork quilts that she had made by hand, spending hours and days on each one couldn't keep him warm. He relaxed and resigned himself to sleep, the only place his peace could be found.

The morning sun broke through the shades, disturbing the darkness of his bedroom. Slowly, he slid out of the bed, and pulled the quilt up over his feathered pillow. The brass bed is dull now, he noticed. Thelma used to polish it often until it shown brighter than the doorknobs in the capitol building up in Raleigh. He and Thelma had gone to the capitol once, about twenty-five years ago when they were both much younger. They went to celebrate their anniversary. Thelma had been so impressed with the beautiful, shiny brass fixtures that she vowed to have hers just as shiny.

Mr. Connor put on his slippers, reached for his cane, and walked to the bathroom. After a quick shower, he put on the khaki pants and cotton shirt he had worn the day before, and went into the kitchen.

He laid out the same china plate and silver utensils, then made toast and spread it with the grape jelly that Mrs. Whittaker from the church had brought by. The sun rose quickly, warming up the air, so that he noticed it would be another hot and humid day.

After he cleaned the table, Mr. Connor walked out the screen door, letting it bang shut and took his seat in the rocker. The children were already coming down the street, laughing and running. Some carried balls; others carried a bat or a scrap of carpet to use as a base.

Katherine, dressed in a bright pink cotton jumper and tennis shoes carried a softball in her right hand. Her blonde pigtails were tied with cherry pink ribbons and the curls bounced as she ran down the street with the other children. Her blonde hair seemed to capture the sunlight and radiate

a glow all around her face. Her cheeks were a pink that seemed to blend in with her dress, and compliment her healthy tan.

"Well, here comes Faye," he said aloud. "I didn't know that Thelma let her spend the night off. She looks like she had a good time though." The children were too far away to hear him speak, so he just observed. Then he turned, "Thelma, come here and look at Faye. She's become quite athletic, but sometimes I wonder if we should let her play these rough sports instead of keeping her inside to play with her dolls. She's become such a tomboy." The children invaded the yard and placed the carpet scraps in the appropriate places. Two teams were chosen by flipping a coin, and the game began. Katherine stepped up to home plate, the long bat firmly in her hands. She swung with all her might and made contact with the ball.

Mr. Connor watched the child he had never had, run the bases after her turn at bat. The pigtails caught the sunlight and gleamed, as she bounded towards the scrap of carpet.

Mr. Connor smiled with admiration, closed his eyes, and began to speak to the silence of the porch, to Faye, to Thelma, to the vision of Katherine running to the base in the loose dust of the field.

"Don't run so fast, Faye. Your mother and I can't keep up with you. We can't run as fast as you can, Faye. Where did you go? We can't see your pretty pink jumper anymore, Faye. Can you see her, Thelma? The fog is too thick to see anything."

He lifted his hand from the arm of the rocking chair and held it out into the stillness of the morning air.

"Take my hand, Faye. You have to slow down so we can keep up with you. Here, Faye, take my hand."

His right hand dropped, and rested on his thigh. His feeble hand gripped the weathered chair. Katherine, on second, ran to third when the ball was hit, were she was declared safe by the teen-aged umpire.

"It's getting dark, Faye. Your mother needs to go back inside. Where are we? We need to get back to the house because this damp air isn't good for your mother."

His hands clasped in his lap, and then moved to fold in front of his chest. His head was tilted to the left, and the muscles in his left leg twitched.

"I need my jacket, Thelma. Is it in the hall closet? Come on, Faye," he called, "let's go home."

His hands stretched out into the air and reached for emptiness as he rearranged himself in his rocker.

Katherine watched the batter intently, ready to run. The bat made contact with the ball which was her cue to run, and she did, with all her might. The

ball flew to the short-stop who caught it and threw it to home plate. Katherine put forth every bit of energy she could muster in an attempt to beat the softball to home plate. Her attempt failed as the ball went into the catcher's mitt before her feet touched the carpet.

"Thelma, take my hand. Reach, Thelma. Reach farther, I can't touch you. Come on, Faye, let's go home.

Mr. Connor breathed heavily and grasped for the sunlight pouring onto the porch. He gave a heavy sigh and collapsed in the rocking chair, a peaceful smile on his face. His head dropped onto his left shoulder and he rested his hands in his lap.

Silence returned to the porch, the sunlight shining intently on Mr. Connor's face.

Katherine walked to the right of home plate, and sat beside her brother, her pigtails bobbing as she walked. She sat down beside her brother to wait for her next turn at bat.

Kim Harrell

Audrey Ward

LIVING ROOM

My Living Room
a rambling boisterous place
with
ancient oaken floors,
     freshly polished
the staircase railing
     worn from sliding bottoms,
my granny's faded patch work quilt
     (blue ginghams, crimson calicos)
hangs over the balcony rail,
a well-used leather couch
     where children and puppies cuddle,
plump armchairs in tweedy blues,
     my favorite creaky rocker,
and a footstool before the stone fireplace
     proud trophies on the mantel piece,
the antique glass over the mantel
     mirroring our past
old oak bookshelves line one wall
     with bookish treats for every taste,
nearby an ancient gun rack
     encasing dear old relics,
pictures of horses, children, dogs,
my mother's delicate gold inlaid china
     safe in the ponderous breakfront,
in one corner
      portrait of a young bride
veiled in white lace,
     memories of another day
they are all grown and gone now
     but still . . .
     I feel the warmth
       of a thousand fires
          toasting frozen feet and hands,
endless tracks of mud and snow
     across the floor,
and the pleasant scent
     of just damp dogs and children
     still is here,
I hear the echoes
     of laughter, songs, and shouts.
     in my favorite room . . .
so filled with Living.

Roberta Mothershead

MISSING PERSON

Chubby brown baby,
     your head fringed in corn silk
Where have you gone?
Those fat hamster cheeks and pink gummed grin
     have long ago departed
Your silken hair turned brown
I cannot often find you now
     except for in the shadows of a young man's
     blue-green eyes
Your laugh, once impish, has deepened into
     a soothing chuckle
Your endless pestering
     is occasionally replaced by
     true companionship these days.
I remember when they brought you home
     "Where did he come from?" I had asked.
And now I ask the same of you, young man.
     Where did you come from
And where has my baby brother gone?

Bryson Booth

Cynthia Pimentel

Patty Pancoast

DOUBLE VISION

From a lofty point we view our new land,
A raw, dense wilderness we now see.
We contemplate with deed in hand
What this land will someday be:

Thick wooded acres of brush and vine
Flourish in the midst of our lawn;
Wild daisies grow in the paved driveway,
Queen's Anne's lace in the pond.
A covey of quail abide on the porch;
Scraggly pines bend over the barn;
Wild rabbits nest in our mailbox;
Deer wander where horses roam.
Foxes, snakes and lizards slink
Where cattle pause to graze;
Rabbit weed thrives in the garden bed;
Squirrels scurry where our old cat plays.
Fallen oaks decay in the stable trough;
Owls dwell in the loft of the barn;
A whippoorwill perches high on our roof,
Singing to welcome us home.

Kay Davis

THE CIRCLE UNBROKEN

They say there are no heroes left,
the eye of fantasy, long past,
They heartily claim chivalry's death,
white knights abroad no more.

Alas, they sigh...
for bravery and valor past,
Mourning the long ago death of romance.

They do not glimpse the glitter,
a whiff of breezy conquest
They do not know...
of dreamy aurora shine.
They do not see...
the enchantment.

They do not know...
the circle continues unbroken.

Roberta Mothershead

FOR MEANING THAT IS MEANT

Words cannot describe
Feelings that are felt;
One can go past words
For meaning that is meant.

Soar beyond the words,
Like a bird through the clouds
For meaning that is meant.

The author writes the words,
The life force behind each
For meaning that is meant.

Search through what you know,
Until you find
The meaning that is meant.

Jennifer Brown

EMPTY HOLE, SHORT ROOTS

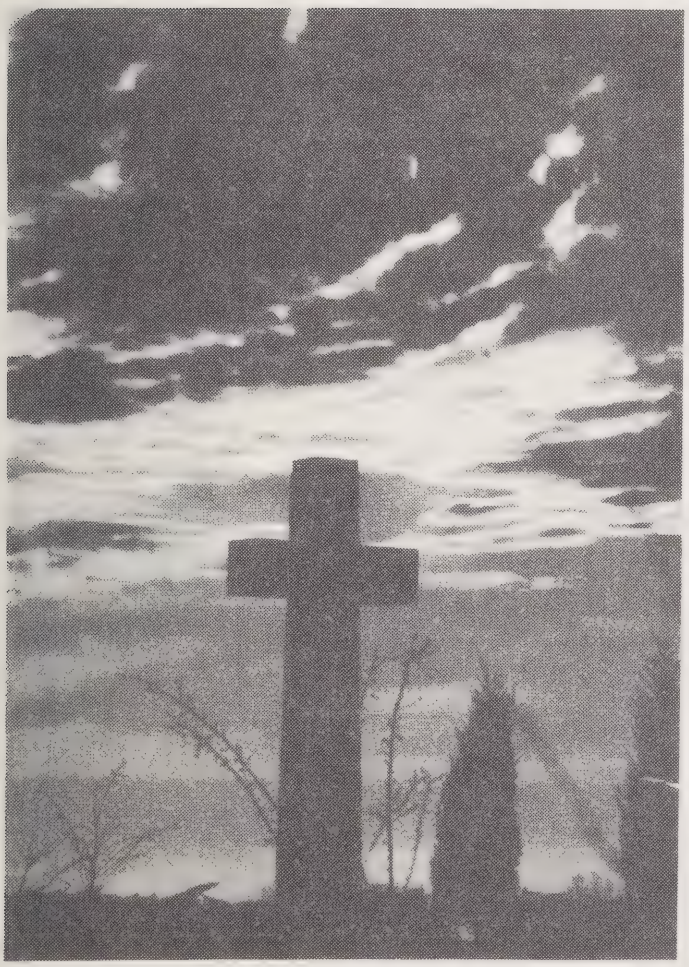
Like a gust of wind in an open field,
So is that of my darkened lonely soul.
Security of close friends does not shield,
Or begin to fill up this empty hole.

Awakening with another vague day,
Unable to grasp any peace of mind.
Weeds in the field have no roots in the clay,
So is my life; my purpose is quite blind.

I shall outlive this dreadful loneliness;
By chance, discover a cure for grief.
A special contact to bring happiness-
Perhaps meeting my God shall bring relief.

Finding faith will fill the hole, set me free,
To grow roots long and strong, faith is the key.

Wendy Cox



Cheryl Owens

VALLEY STORM

Rage bellows forth as
the gods collide.
Their anger echoes across
the tranquil valley.

Fierce and forceful
fighting continues.
Rivers rise and clouds clash
while darkness descends.

Crashing cymbals sound as
the rambling rage persists.
The gods grant no glimpse of peace
as gusty winds prevail.

Voices of gods grow until
one last utterance grumbles in the distance.
Quivering vibrations no longer endure;
the trembling earth hushes once more.

Kim Croom

Cheryl Owens

IN DEDICATION

Your eyes,
They twinkle,
Teasing,
Daring.
Your touch,
It tickles
Trailing across
My arm.
A planned
Touch,
And yet so seemingly
Innocent,
Undirected.
Freckles
That dance
On an upturned nose,
Dimples
So deep,
So open to caress,
And a smile,
Used to tempt
And to chide.
Can it be no
Wonder,
That I dream
Longingly,
Of touching the dimples,
Staring into the eyes,
And silencing the smile.

Audrey Ward

WE ARE AS PRISMS

We are as Prisms
Intaking and outreaching;
We are facets connecting
To the rest of the world.
But, we are reserved
For we are fragile and yet Strong.
We receive pure light
From the heavens
And feel refreshed with Spring in heart.
We make rainbows for all.
And when the rain comes
The rainbows go away.
In the light the rainbows
Come again;
Subtle as they appear;
Just shining.
From nowhere and to nowhere,
Yet, the prism knows.
That is the wonder.
We are as prisms.

Jennifer Brown

CORA

I'm thankful for three things:
Being healthy,
Eating three meals a day,
And going to church on Sunday.

I'm old, guess how old I am?
90 years old last March.
A big birthday party was held for me and the preacher came,
Were you there?

I'm getting forgetful and can hardly see to walk up
The steps at church.
But I love to hear the preacher on Sunday morning.
(Sometimes I don't hear a thing if I've neglected
To wear my hearing aid.)

He always quits on time-
Never goes past twelve.
I like that, we eat lunch at twelve.

Someone comes to take me to church every week.
Her name slips my mind sometimes,
But she is a good driver.

I insist that she not walk me to the door,
But she does,
Just hate to be a bother.
I need to give her a dollar for gas next Sunday.

I'm getting forgetful and can hardly see to walk.
People speak to me and expect me
To know who they are.
(I've never even met them before!)

Guess how old I am?
90 years old last March!
But I feel 65!
I've not an ache or pain,
I'm grateful for that.
I get three good meals a day
And go to church on Sunday.

Kay Davis

GRAFFITTI

carol loves "elvis"
did she really know him?

sam was here
what did he do?

jane + lindsy
what does it equal?

jim morrison lives forever
where does he live?

sit on it
on what?

john and alice forever
how long did forever last?

class of '81
where did they all go?

i love you
should i carve it on the railing?

Ashley Leister

Audrey Ward

CURTAIN CALL

At five minutes before curtain time, Melanie slipped in unnoticed into the end seat on the back row of the school auditorium. What am I doing here? she asked herself. She had flown in for the weekend to attend her parents' thirtieth wedding anniversary party, never guessing she would end up here, at a recital conducted by her long-time friend. But when she arrived home, her mother had shown her tall, slender daughter an old pair of tap shoes she had found while cleaning out the attic. The shoes reminded Melanie's mother of Kate's dancing recital which just happened to be that night. "I think it would be nice if you went, it's been a year since you and Kate saw each other, you know." Melanie's mother looked closely into her daughter's heavily made-up face and she spoke again,"I know how you feel about dancing," she hesitated, "Kate told me about your turning down several good teaching jobs in New York."

"Yes, Mother, I did," Melanie said in a strained voice. "But I've told you over and over that if I can't dance for a big company, then I don't want to have anything to do with dancing at all, not even teaching!" To avoid any further discussions concerning her career choices, Melanie decided to leave her parents' house for a while and go to Kate's recital.

Now seated in the hard, straight chair, her sharp green eyes darted about unconsciously for Kate, Of course she is backstage, frantically trying to get everyone ready in their correct positions, she thought. I can picture her now, consoling a little five-year-old girl who has her first case of stage fright, and almost at the same time, going over intricate ballet steps with a fifteen-year-old who desperately wants to impress her family and friends. Melanie grinned. Kate always seemed to sense whenever anyone needed help and generously came to their rescue. Like the time when they were fifteen and Kate had spent every afternoon for two weeks helping a six-year-old girl learn her routine. Melanie remembered what Kate had told her. "Oh Melanie, she broke her leg and wore a cast for eight weeks. She got so far behind in her claseese, but desperately wanted to dance in the recital. I really wanted to help!" That Kate, Melanie thought, always willing to help.

"Pardon me, did you say something?" A clear strident voice startled Melanie as she turned to her side and realized that she had just spoken her thoughts aloud. Not looking directly at the person who had just spoken to her, Melanie stiffened her back, uncrossed her legs and pretended to pin a stray hair.

"Oh I was just saying that Kate is an aquaintance of mine." Melanie spoke hurriedly but then decided to glance at the person who had interrupted her thoughts. The woman looked about fifty; she was very petite and skinny. How can anyone so small and frail looking have such a loud, strong voice, thought Melanie as she was suddenly drawn to the enormous amount of jewelry that the woman wore. Over a plain red dress with short puffy sleeves, there were at least eight gold chains of all lengths draped about her neck. Her tiny, thin arms were adorned too. On her right arm several gold bangled bracelets, wide and narrow, hung loosely. A thick silver charm bracelet with a trinket on each link seemed to weigh down her left arm. Her hands, which were resting on a white worn shawl laid carelessly across her lap, looked like a gypsy's, with rings of gold, jade, onyx, sapphire and pearl. Melanie could not keep herself from staring at the

woman whose graying hair was cropped close to her head. She'd look almost like a man if she weren't wearing those big pink rose earrings, thought Melanie, and she drew her attention to the stage and away from the woman who she didn't want to get into a conversation with. But it was too late. The woman had obviously noted Melanie's stares and taking them as encouragement for conversation, turned to face her.

In her loud voice, the woman began to speak. "Oh Kate is a wonderful person, and everyone loves her. I just moved into town six months ago but I have gotton to know her quite well. She's very good with children; I only wish I had a daughter who could take lessons from her. Had four sons, they're all grown now. But I know many women here who have daughters that attend Kate's classes. They just adore her." The woman finally paused for a breath but before Melanie could politely turn away, she began again, "I am really excited about this recital, you see I run a little antique shop right across the street from Kate's studio and I have been watching the girls going in and out of practice in their costumes. By the way, my name is Mrs. Rupert. Mr. Rupert is dead and I live all alone." She thrust her bony right hand towards Melanie, who reluctantly shook it, the clinking sound of the bracelets ringing in her ears.

But before Melanie had the chance to introduce herself, she heard the rolling, whisking and squeaking sound of the curtains being pulled open - the same old faded pea green curtains, still wrinkled and dragging the floor. Melanie recognized them and thought about the many times they must have opened for her and Kate's recitals through their growing years.

The curtains opened, revealing the familiar small stage, shiny and bare, but reflecting the bright gold letters hanging down from rusty pipes, spelling "Growing Up", the theme of Kate's recital.

Moments later, eight five-and-six-year old little girls tapped their way on stage and began their routine, all looking at each others' feet to make sure they were all doing it right. They were dressed in pretty pink leotards with pink-and-white sequined tutus around their waists, and their shiny black shoes tied with pink brogan ribbon - a perfect finishing touch to their costumes. Melanie found herself feeling a little impressed and thought, They're certainly prettier than the costumes Kate and I wore when we were five. She remembered their first recital. Kate and she had been yellow butterflies; and Melanie's left wing had kept falling off, and Kate's antenna came loose and fell in her eyes.

Melanie could not keep from laughing as she pictured herself and Kate on the stage struggling with their costumes and trying to dance at the same time. She was suddenly aware of Mrs. Rupert coldly staring at her; perhaps she'd thought that Melanie was making fun of the little girls on stage.

Although Melanie didn't wish to talk to Mrs. Rupert, she felt she should be polite and explain her laughter. She leaned over and whispered into Mrs. Rupert's ear, "Excuse me for laughing, but I was just thinking back to funny things that happened when Kate and I were in our first recital."

The dance continued. A little girl tripped over her pink ribbon that had become untied as a result of too many shuffle-hop-steps. Finally the music stopped and the girls, with big smiles on their faces, proudly bowed to the audience. Mrs. Rupert leaned over to Melanie and spoke, "My, didn't those

young girls do beautifully! I know Kate is so proud of them." She turned and joined in on the clapping, the charms on her bracelet wildly bouncing up and down. Melanie clapped also and thought how well the dance had gone, considering the young age of the girls. She began to relax and look forward to the rest of the program. She even smiled at Mrs. Rupert and decided that except for her incessant talking, she was probably a pretty nice lady.

Next on stage came a group of seven-and-eight year olds. Melanie was mildly surprised to see a boy among the nine or ten girls. They were all outfitted in blue tights and long-sleeve leotards, with the girls wearing lacey blue sequined skirts. While the girls looked very dainty performing their leaps and plies, the boy looked extremely uncomfortable as he performed awkward turns and arabesques. Melanie looked about the audience and wondered where the boy's parents were sitting. Cupping one hand aginst her mouth Mrs. Rupert whispered to Melanie, "His Mama and Daddy should be ashamed of themselves forcing their son to do something he clearly dislikes. It's awful!" Melanie nodded her head and mouthed the words, I agree, to Mrs. Rupert. Melanie felt sorry for the young boy also, but at the same time puzzled that anyone, male or female, would not enjoy dancing because she knew of the pleasure that it brought her. Then why am I not dancing? This question suddenly popped into Melanie's mind, but she quickly pushed it aside and clapped with enthusiasm for the red-faced boy who seemed very relieved that the dance was over and he could hurry off stage.

When the main lights were switched on for intermission, Melanie watched as many smiling, proud parents filed out of their seats and walked up the aisle to get in line for refreshments. Melanie chose to remain seated, although her legs were cramped and she was quite thirsty. She couldn't help overhearing the remarks and comments made as people walked past her on their way to the lobby.

"Kate has worked night and day getting this recital together," said one lady who carried a camera in one hand and instant pictures in the other.

A fat balding man bragged to anyone that would listen. "That was my granddaughter you saw in the first dance. I know you saw her, she's the one with the long red ponytail. She was the best one up there, she was."

"Kate has done a wonderful job preparing these kids to dance in front of an audience," said one woman as she struggled with two small boys, one on each hand, who were squirming to escape their mother's clutches.

"And you know she even helped the mothers sew the costumes," said a young woman trying to dodge the little boys' feet as they hopped and jumped up the aisle.

A young couple walked by next. "Oh Stanley, he looked so cute in his little blue leotard," said an obviously proud, smiling woman.

"He looked like a damn sissy," muttered a rough, muscular looking man with a scowl on his face. Her response was drowned out as they walked on up the aisle.

So they were the boy's parents, thought Melanie. I can guess who the boss is in that family.

Melanie heard several more comments, all favorable, and she found herself agreeing with them all. Kate has put an enormous amount of herself in this recital, Melanie thought, and it has really paid off. This is a first class

dancing recital-but them I expect that from Kate.

Suddenly Mrs. Rupert stood, flung her suitcase-sized pocketbook which hit Melanie's hand that held her rolled-up unread program, sending it to the floor. "Oh, I'm sorry," she apologized, "but I've just got to get up and stretch my old bones a minute. As soon as I get a cup of coffee I'll be right back and we can talk. I want to hear more about you and Kate." Mrs. Rupert threw her shawl around her tiny shoulders and walked quickly towards the lobby.

Melanie was glad to have a few minutes alone. Mrs. Rupert's mention of coffee reminded her of the last time she and Kate had seen one another. It was a little over a year ago and she and Kate were having coffee at a small, busy deli in New York City. She remembered the scene as if it were only yesterday. She and Kate were sitting in a booth by the front window near the door, oblivious to busy waitresses rushing by and customers passing by them going in and out of the deli. Melanie remembered that her and Kate's attention had been totally focused on themselves and the career decisions they were going to have to face.

"Oh Melanie, we've just got to face the facts," Kate had said, "We've tried our best but we have just been turned down for the twelfth time. Our teachers warned us about the chances of us getting a job, remember they didn't give us any guarantees. I'm tired of auditions and New York, and I'm ready to move on to something else. You know, I think I would like teaching dance, how about you? I think I'd be just as happy dancing in front of learning students as I would in front of a big audience." Kate stopped and looked into Melanie's eyes.

"You can forget about me Kate, I'm not quitting. Look, we just graduated four months ago. I didn't take dancing for eighteen years and major in it in college for nothing. I want to be a professional dancer, not a teacher. You go right ahead Kate and me, I'm staying in New York."

"And I did," whispered Melanie, as she took a deep breath.

"You did what?" questioned Mrs. Rupert. Melanie had been so deep in her thoughts, she hadn't even noticed that Mrs. Rupert had returned to her seat.

Why Melanie felt a need to confess her feelings she didn't know, but she began to talk to Mrs. Rupert. "You know, I don't even know where to begin." Melanie nervously squirmed in her seat, which caused it to squeak. "You see, I live in New York where I work as a secretary. Ever since Kate and I were small we wanted to grow up and become professional dancers. We spent a whole summer together in New York after graduating from college looking for a job." Melanie paused as an elderly, distinguished-looking gentleman, aided by a walking cane, slowly made his way in front of her and Mrs. Rupert to get back to his seat. She continued, "At the end of the summer Kate decided to move back home. Our old dance teacher was retiring and planning to close the studio because there was no one to run it. Kate thought it was the perfect opportunity for us and she got more and more excited as she thought about teaching in her old studio." Mrs. Rupert, obviously genuinely interested in Melanie's story, remained silent but leaned closer towards the young woman and listened as she continued. "Of course she wanted us to be partners, but I refused. I thought, why should I waste my time and talents teaching kids when I had my own career to think about. She tried hard to change my mind but finally accepted my decision. Her parents helped her to

to buy and fix up the studio and I stayed in New York to keep looking for a dancing job. After six months of rejections and countless "We'll let you knows," my bank account and my ambitions grew thin and I decided to quit dancing altogether."

"Oh my," interrupted Mrs. Rupert, "why would you do a thing like that?"

Melanie looked down at her lap. "I guess I'm the type that has to have all or nothing. Just last week I had a good job offer from a school of the arts in New York, but I turned it down. They even gave me their card to call them if I changed my mind. But I won't," she added quickly. Then Melanie suddenly grew quiet, surprised at herself for talking so much to a stranger. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to go on and on like that."

"Oh that's all right, go ahead and talk," urged Mrs. Rupert eagerly, "especially if it makes you feel better."

But it doesn't make me feel better, thought Melanie. She didn't respond to Mrs. Rupert but silently began to question the decision she had made concerning her dancing career. Feelings of uncertainty filled her mind and she tried to erase them. She was glad to see the last of the audience filing back to their seats. She could now focus her attention on the rest of the recital, and not on her problems.

As the lights grew dim again, to signal the end of intermission, the audience lowered their voices until all that was heard was few scattered shh's. Even Mrs. Rupert and her jewelry ceased to make noise. Melanie felt more tense after her own remembering but she soon relaxed after the curtains managed to open one more time and a group of girls, who looked about twelve or thirteen, tapped their way on stage. They were dressed in cute red-and-white checkered cheerleader costumes and waving red-and-white pom poms in each hand. This dance, along with the cheerful fight song melody that accompanied it, put Melanie in happier spirits as she focused all of her attention on the dance, enjoying the innovative steps that Kate had woven into the routine. Bits of red and whit from the pom poms floated to the stage floor from the girls' wild shaking and waving of their arms. This number is terrific! Melanie thought to herself. It almost makes me want to get up there and join them.

Evidently the audience had the same enthusiastic feeling because they began to clap to the music. When the dance was over, loud cheers and whistles joined the applause. Mrs. Rupert became so excited, she jumped out of her seat stepping on Melanie's foot and knocking her purse to the floor. "I just can't help myself!" she shouted above the cheers and whistles.

The next number, a contrast, featured two teenage girls wearing toe shoes. This is probably their first performance on toe, Melanie thought, as she immediately recognized their nervousness and inexperience. The girls wore pale green sequined costumes with matching headpieces. As the soothing music played on, the girls seemed, to Melanie, to gain more confidence as their moves became more graceful. The two girls reminded Melanie of her and Kate the first time they had performed on toe. We probably looked exactly like those two, Melanie smiled to herself and then wondered if the two girls were as close as she and Kate were at that age, and in what direction dancing was going to take them in future years.

The girls smiled and looked proud as they finished their dance and took several bows. Melanie clapped extra hard for the girls who she knew had worked

long hours learning their routine.

"Kate has worked hard with those girls, I can tell," Melanie whispered to Mrs. Rupert, who was trying to untangle her charm bracelet from her shawl so she could clap.

"Oh she has," Mrs. Rupert finally managed to free her bracelet. "I saw them going into the studio several nights a week for extra practice. Kate is a generous person, I told you she is something special! But then you already know that, don't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Rupert, I surely do." Melanie turned to the stage once more and watched the next few dances with intensifying interest. She appreciated more and more the amount of time and talent Kate must have devoted to this recital. It was so creative and beautifully organized. Melanie's instincts told her to run backstage and grab a pair of shoes-tap, ballet or toe. It had been so long and her desire to dance was beginning to overwhelm her.

Melanie had paid little attention to her program that was handed to her as she came in, but now lay crumpled on the floor, so she was totally unprepared for the last performance. The green curtains closed and opened again quickly, revealing a beautifully poised dancer. Everyone including Melanie leaned forward in their seats. Melanie sensed something special as all the stage lights went out and a powerful beam overhead came on, shining directly on--on, "It's Kate!" Melanie could barely whisper the words as she watched Kate, in the same delicate white sequined ballerina costume, that she had worn at her last performance as a senior in college. She wore white tights, her toe shoes were pink, the satin ribbon wrapped neatly and tightly about her ankles. Her hair was even arranged the same, braided and put into a bun, only a white satin ribbon tied around it. Her bangs, as always, were cut bluntly across her forehead.

Melanie watched closely as Kate began her routine, soon realizing that it was the one Kate had choreographed herself while they were in college. Melanie had watched Kate practice this number over and over. It has been over two years ago but it was still very clear in Melanie's mind. She found herself anticipating Kate's every movements. "Jeté, she whispered upcoming movements, "Fouettés, jeté, grand jeté!" Kate's dancing was lovely to watch as she glided and leaped with the grace and poise of a --a professional dancer! It's as if she is performing for a large dance company in New York, instead of in front of a small town audience! There really is no difference, thought Melanie. Kate's eyes were calm, her port de bras were those of a disciplined ballerina. Her pirouettes were performed with brilliance and speed. "Glissé, pliés, pliés!" Melanie had to strain herself from shouting the words, as she became more and more involved in Kate.

Mrs. Rupert punched Melanie, her rings digging into her arms. "The girls begged Kate to do this solo. Isn't she beautiful?"

But Melanie didn't respond to Mrs. Rupert's punch or comments because all of her concentration was on Kate. Beautiful, Kate, arabesque! Now go into your finish, grand jeté, again, stop, pirouette, perfect!

When the dance was over, Melanie felt mentally and physically exhausted as if she had done the dance herself. Tears sprung from her eyes as Kate took a bow. One of Kate's students, a short, chubby little girl with hair just long enough to make pigtails, ran up to Kate on stage and thrust a large straw

basket filled with red roses into her arms. Melanie could see that Kate was moved as she grasped the basket in one hand and the little girl with the other. The audience clapped and cheered as Kate motioned all of her students to return to the stage for a final bow.

The bright lights that suddenly came on made Melanie squint as she watched the old squeaky curtains close, and her view of Kate disappeared. Melanie stood, her legs cramped from sitting so long, and she reached into her purse for a tissue. As she began to step into the moving line of people leaving the auditorium, she felt a tug at her arm. Turning around, she faced Mrs. Rupert, who grabbed Melanie's sleeve before she could move away from her anymore, and said, "Wait a minute, I didn't ever get your name. Who did you say you were so I can tell Kate that I met you?"

Mrs. Rupert's questions didn't bother Melanie anymore, for she only hesitated a moment before she replied, "Tell Kate, you sat with a soon-to-be ex-secretary who has finally grown up."

Melanie suddenly opened her purse, rummaged through make-up, tissues and brushes, until she found the card with the number of the New York dance school. She tucked it neatly and securely in her wallet. Then she took one last look at the old faded pea green curtains before she left and decided they didn't look so wrinkled after all.

Kay Davis

I REMEMBER

I remember when we first met,
I was a freshman, who was lost.
Lost in an endless maze of halls.
You smiled and showed me the way.
It only took a moment but,
I remember.

The next year I was in your English class,
Had trouble with vocabulary,
But learned as you taught
Us to pick out ideas and themes.
You understood and listened to
Our chatter and smiled,
I remember.

My junior year you were in homeroom.
At times the bell would ring and
In the room I would run.
Only once did you send me for a slip.
We laughed and joked,
I remember.

My senior year, this year,
You were again my teacher,
Teasing us and sharing our jokes.
I never left without feeling happier.
One day you were there,
The next, you were gone.

I can't fully accept the fact
That you are gone.
I keep thinking: anytime now,
Anytime now you'll come in the door....
But deep inside I know you won't,
I'll always remember you.

You touched the lives of us all.
Anyone who met you felt the warmth
That came from your heart.
You were a very special part in my life,
Mr. McTiernan.
I'll never forget you.

Christine Kays

DEFEAT

Feet planted firmly
waiting and ready
hands held tightly.
The winds hits the sails
testing my grip with its power.
My hands burn.
The rope slides through my palms,
salt water splashes over the bow
hindering my vision.
The red hot blisters
Reveal themselves in my palms.
The sun dries my hair,
leaving only crusty salt,
As we look bleakly
at competitors passing us by,
we laboriously take the sails down.
Folding in them the hopes
of greatness.

Kim Harrell

SUNSET AT THE SEASHORE

Gentle waves caress the shore,
the sandcrabs' lullaby.

Across the horizon the sky
is ablaze: fighting dusk's
first shadows.

The reflections of the
sleepy water reveal the
earth's calm.

Seagulls echo their last
refrain and disappear into
the endless heavens.

Seashells lie like forgotten
ornaments on a shelf; waiting
impatiently for dawn.

Joy Shell

WHERE DOES TIME HIDE?

Locked in a cage
no access to time,
for things I want
and like
to do.
The day escapes me
like a slippery cube of ice
through a clutched hand.
Where did my share
of secondsminuteshours go?
In my room, I know I can't find a thing,
but surely somewhere under all that rubble
there must be a minute or even a second
hiding.
It's the time I spend watching Guiding Light,
eating popcorn, or the time
I'm talking with friends that slips
so quickly by.
Only when I study or can't keep my eyes open from boredom
does time seem to l-i-n-g-e-r and
antagonize me.
I just keep thinking
to myself,
there must be a way.....
to add one more hour to each elusive day.

Karen Kingsbury

PLEASE, START THE MUSIC!

Softness sifts the silence
of the air.
Then, sudden eruptions of noise,
quicken me to quiver.
Clashes of brass, clanks, and clatters
stir and startle me.
Rumbling vibrations roll from
thundering sticks.
Over, over, again, and again.
Finally, do I hear a hint of harmony?
I take a big breath,
remove fingers from ears,
and sigh: The band is ready to start.

Karen Kingsbury

ROCKETTE FINALS

Positions are open-
But, only a few.
Thirty girls try-
We only need two.

A one, and a two,
And a three,
And a four.

Hair sprayed in place,
Eyes fine-lined.
Flashing white teeth,
Chins held high.

A one, and a two,
And a three,
And a four.

Palms become sweaty,
Nerves on edge.
Hot taps slap-
On a waxed wood stage.

A one, and a two,
And a three,
And a four.

Beth Saleeby

SLEET IN A FAMILY GRAVEYARD

A million diminutive prisms beat
  against the empty eyes of my creaking house
    Melting
            into
                tear
                    drops
Across
      cold
          transparent
                    squares.
Evanescent crystals, lying like still-born
  infants in the snow
    Fade
        into
            dingy
                slush.
A million diamond pebbles
  Fall
      like
          jewels
Over
    the
       frozen
             earth
                  where dead men lie,
Winter's breath
  spits
       frozen
             glass
Upon their tombstones.

Bryson Booth

Cynthia Pimentel

URBAN REFUGEE

Barefoot
in the cold,
Face bare, too,
and blistered by the wind,
Your tattered coat droops
sadly past your knees.
Starlings laugh at you
from lamp posts over head
And even gutter rats
will not befriend you.
Life is not a fairy tale, little boy,
I guess no one had to tell you that.
Brave little man
with bottom lip trembling,
Are you afraid --
or only cold?
A hundred mothers' hearts
cry out for you,
Not one of them is yours.
Lost in a maze
of scummy streets and rubbled buildings
With millions more just like you;
you are all alone
Playing hide-and-seek with fortune.

Bryson Booth

ANTICIPATION

The sudden clatter
of cold metal
clamped me in the seat.
Calling my attention
to the sudden sensation
I would soon suffer.
The cruel conductor,
Barks coarse commands.
And the warning;
That the roller coaster will soon begin.

Kim Harrell

FEAR

Headlights startle my vision
Hypnotized
Transfixed
By the impending danger, no time to think
Rationally
Only time to see
Blurred visions,
And to hear
silence
Before her screams
And grinding metal.
Afraid to speak
If I can
Afraid of the silence
If I can't.
Wondering if there will be
an answer.
The putrid smell of gas
and the burning tires
And waiting for the (explosion).
Blue and red lights startle my vision.

Kim Harrell

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

They must laugh and think it's just a game:
teasing and enticing those who love the sport,
taking small bites from each corner,
they are as sneaky as we.
All gathered around, they watch
until the hook is totally bare,
then leave and move to a new spot,
fooling and frustrating yet another.
On shore the mood is somewhat different:
Patience walks a thin line as anticipation grows;
waiting to feel that first real strike,
hoping this time it's not the wave
in the water that taunts the line
and gives one such a start.
Yet, still reeling in an empty rig
he feels as though he is one,
against so many.
Hours pass,
hands aching from the numerous casts,
tired and discouraged, he puts aside
high hopes of that luscious dinner,
packs up his defeat and fishing gear
and heads for home.
Flipping through his mind the stories he will tell
of the ones that got away.

Karen Kingsbury

PLEASE CONCENTRATE

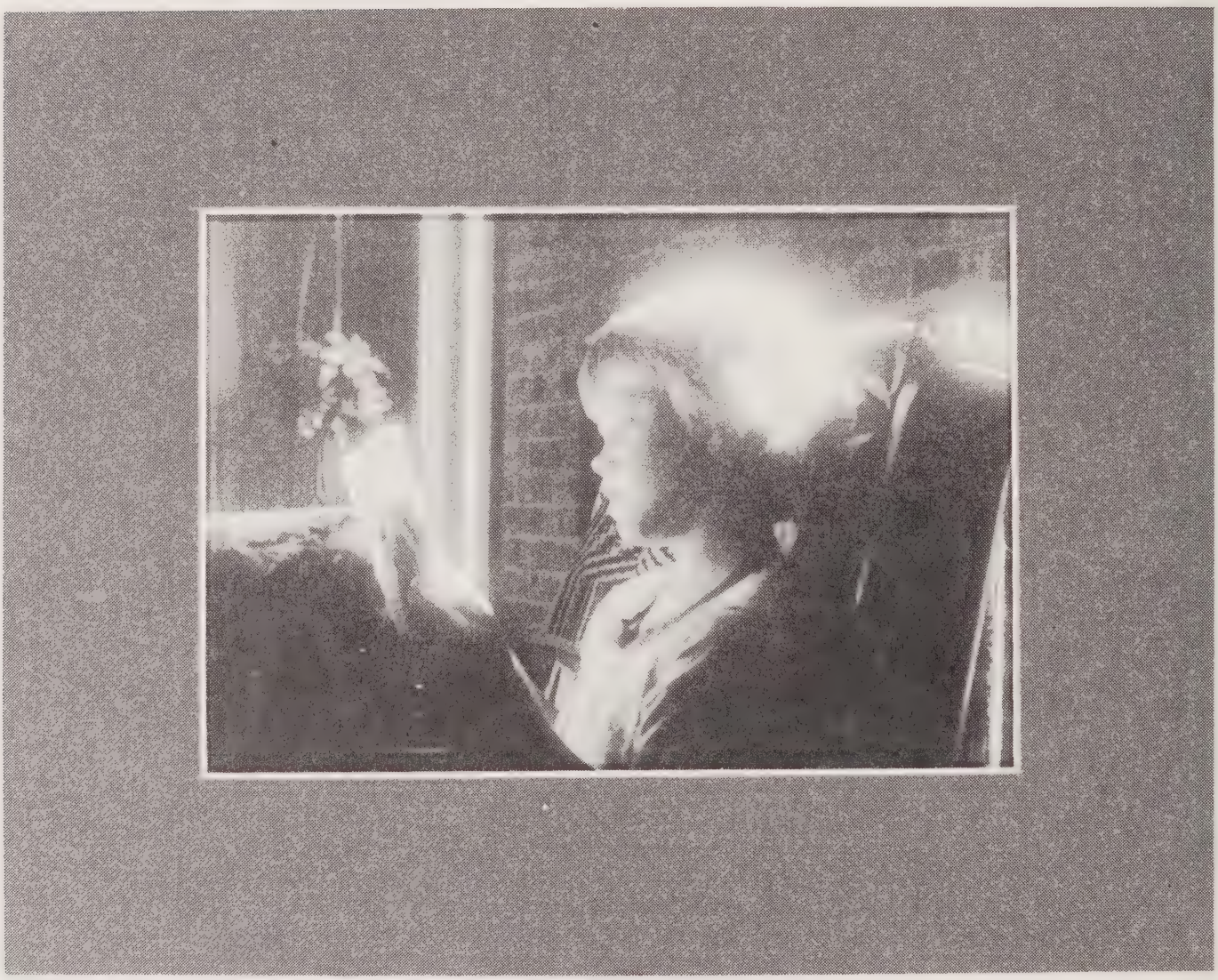
reading the text for my assignment --

please concentrate.
memories of you slide through econ like toes in mud.

must read these words uninterrupted
but you continue
(like onions)

eventually econ is deciphered
my mind still thinks of you --

Ashley Leister



Audrey Ward

NAME SAKES

Dorothy shifted her weight uncomfortably and brought her attention back to the present place and time. She noticed the bald cabbie's freckled head and wondered why he was not wearing a hat as most New Yorker cabbies did. He kept his elbow out the open window, and the cold air constantly beat him in the face. In the rear-view mirror Dorothy could see him squinting ahead at the road, his eyes all red and teary from the wind, and she wished she had thought to wear a warmer sweater. The cab driver leaned out the window and spit the brown juice of his chewing tobacco into the wind. Dorothy flinched as it hit the back left side window, stretching back into a glob and tail. She tried not to think about it, as the driver looked back at her through the mirror and gave her a wink and a brown-toothed grin. "Sorry about that," he chuckled. Turning his glance once again to the road he assured her, "Almost there."

"Good," Dorothy whispered with a nod. She turned her eyes toward the scenery out of the opposite window. The trees and houses blurred together and her emotions stirred as her thoughts focused on a time when she must have been about thirteen years old. She and Mamma had been in the kitchen baking sugar cookies. Actually, Mamma baked while Dorothy ate the raw dough.

"Mamma, are you sure I'm Your kid?"

Mamma turned from spooning the batter onto the cookie sheet to look at Dorothy curiously, "What kind of question is that? Of course you're my child."

Dorothy rubbed her nose with the back of her hand, smearing flour all over her face, "Well, I was just wondering if maybe, you know, if me and somebody else might have been lying in the nursery side by side and we accidentally got switched. Do you think that could have happened?" Mamma didn't look up from her work; she just shook her head and smiled. Dorothy knew the answer all too well, but she used to fantasize that she had been born to wealthy parents and that she and Mamma's real baby had been switched at the hospital. Dorothy was sure that she must have been born to live in a nice, big house with columns and a maid, so that boys would be impressed when they came to date her. Instead, she was stuck with Mama in the house and Mamma's baby was on her way to becoming a debutante somewhere.

Yet despite Dorothy's desires to be someone else's child, she had always known that Mamma was a good person, even if she was not tall and sophisticated like the other mothers. Mamma was small-framed and plump like a roly-poly bug, and she had a way of putting on clothes so that even store-bought dresses looked home-made. (Or maybe it was Mamma who did not look put together right). But Mamma had a quiet dignity and was kind to everyone, and she sacrificed minor repairs on the house and car just to see that Dorothy had the right clothes in order to meet the right sorts of people. And she taught Dorothy manners and told her stories of parties and people that Dorothy could not imagine Mamma to be a part of.

Not until recently had Dorothy even considered what Mamma must have been like as a child and then as an adult, before Dorothy was born. Perhaps she would not have thought of it even now, if Dorothy had not curiously observed her own tiny waistline slowly disappearing. Dorothy had always been proud of her figure and had vowed never to be like Mamma; never to look like a cookie-baking housewife with mousey brown hair, broad hips, and big thighs. Never to be such a plain old mother. Of course, Dorothy had realized that she had

always favored Mamma. She had always had Mamma's frame and the shape of her eyes, but her own eyes were hazel instead of grey and dull like Mamma's. Dorothy even ended her laugh in a "stupid" sigh like Mamma, though she tried not to. But neither had laughed much in those days when Dorothy had been growing up; Dorothy had usually been too serious and Mamma had been too tired from sewing all day long. And lately, even though she was almost seven months pregnant, Dorothy had been so caught up in the baby itself that she had ignored the obvious fact that she was soon going to be somebody's mother. She would be called Mamma, a name which, in her book, had been a derogatory term.

But then she realized, Mamma was not nearly as bad as the name she used to be called. Dorothy sometimes thought her name a punishment for the sarcastic tone she used whenever she said, "Mamma," but for seventeen-and-one-half years Mamma and everyone else had called her Dotty Jane. To Dorothy it was like being called Junior. Mamma's name was Jane and to Dorothy, Dotty Jane was like a "sub-Jane," as if she were not quite important enough to have a personal identity. As Dorothy had often said to herself about her name, "It means half mine and half Mamma's."

Dorothy had traveled almost a thousand miles to escape the stigma of her country girl name and even now some face from her childhood would occassionally accost her on the streets of New York calling her by 'that name'. She remembered the time right after her second novel made the best seller list when she saw Stuart Erckman, the boy whom she had a crush on for two years until he'd run against her for student government president and won. He had shouted out her name from half a block away, waving his arms over his head as he approached, making quite a scene. "Dotty Jane! Dotty Jane Dunn, is that you?" he gushed once he had gotten closer. You sure have made the home town proud. Just last week I was telling my brother-in-law how you used to have a crush on me. Reason it came up was Martha, she's my wife now, saw your book on the best seller list she gets from the Literary Guild book club." Stuart was talking very fast and sweat was beading up in the creases of his fat neck. Dorothy had smiled, gritting her teeth, thinking all the while that Martha must be an excellent cook because Stuart had always been in good shape in high school. Dorothy feigned graciousness at Stuart's backward compliments and pretended to listen as he talked about his law practice and how he'd had some urgent business in New York. She wondered disgustedly just how urgent his business could be if it allowed him to stand on a busy sidewalk making other people late for appointments. She was almost glad to give him a personalized autograph which he carefully dictated to her and then checked to see that Dorothy had spelled his name right. Dorothy had wished she had thought to make the error as she made a hasty exit. Just hearing that name, "Dotty Jane," had instantly brought back shivers of the inferiority and insecurity she had felt in high school, even though it seemed so far removed from the person she had now become. Dorothy cringed at the thought of ever having had a romantic interest in fat Stuart Erckman and turned red with the embarrassment of mentally reliving the sidewalk incident.

In an effort to rid her thoughts of Stuart Erckman and the unthinkable possibility of running into him on this visit, Dorothy began to think about why she had made the trip and wondered about the outcome. Now, at twenty-seven, Dorothy was beginning to feel a strong sense of regret over he careless regard for her mother. She realized that she could never undo the hurt which she had inflicted upon Mamma, the pain which Mamma had silently endured as she continued to give unselfishly of herself to her daughter. It wasn't until now, as Dorothy was beginning to have to cancel promotional tours for her novels and decline party invitations from Walt's colleagues because of her advancing

pregnancy, that she understood that Mamma must have been young once too.

Dorothy was sharply jolted back into reality as the baby moved inside her. She reached for her big leather bag and lifted it up over her belly so that she could see the contents of her purse and began to fish around for her book listing female names. Dorothy's obstetrician had told her that the ultrasound test was not designed to tell conclusively what the sex of the child was, but there was a strong possibility that the baby would be a girl. Dorothy did not need further proof; somehow she knew that this child was a girl, and she had gone ahead and painted the nursery yellow. (Pink rooms made her think of all the Pepto-Bismol she had taken for morning sickness.) Just as Dorothy's slender manicured fingers located the little booklet the cab took a sharp turn, sending the purse and book to the floor board. Dorothy tried to regain her balance as she sighed under her breath, "Drives just like a New Yorker." At that moment Dorothy recognized her old neighborhood. The street sign read "Wayfarer Road," just as it always had.

Dorothy looked ahead anxiously through the smudged window observing every detail as the dusty cab bumped along the cracked road. As the taxi neared the house, memories flashed through Dorothy's mind as vivid as snapshots.

This was the place where it had all started, where her mother had grown up and played barefooted and dirty in the strawberry patches out back. Dorothy could almost envision her mother as a chubby blonde toddler sitting among the plants with a red mash from the berries covering the bib of her overalls. Dorothy, also, had grown in this same old house from the time she was two weeks old, when her father had been killed in an automobile accident. She and Mamma had gone to live there so that Gram could help take care of Baby Dotty. For a long time it had just been the three of them in the house and at an early age Dorothy began to sense a pattern forming that did not permit escape from the house. The three of them lived there together until Gram had taken ill and died. (But Mamma and Dorothy had stayed on there even after the funeral.) Dorothy did not want to grow old and die without ever leaving the house, as it seemed to her that Gram had done. She promised herself every night after she said her prayers that she would break the chain and leave the house for good once she was "old" like Mamma was, so her little girl would not have nightmares about finding Gram dead and hidden in a closet as Dorothy had done when she was too young to really understand death. Looking back on all of this now, Dorothy could see what an impact Gram's illness and death had had on her. As a child Dorothy had not been able to rationalize that seeing Gram die, screaming in pain, lying in the darkness of her stuffy room was probably a causative factor of her own contempt for the house.

Once she had gone off to college on a scholarship, Dorothy had rarely come home for weekend visits. After she graduated Dorothy had gone "off to New York to become a famous writer" as she had put it in her earlier, brash years. Now she had written three best sellers and was doing research on a fourth novel. She had also married a green-eyed blonde advertising executive named Walter Alexander Abernathy. Walt was an ambitious, yet fun-loving man, from a prominant family. He and Dorothy had met when he was working for the company that published her first novel and was assigned to promote her book. It was not long before Walt worked his way up in the publishers advertising department and he soon started a firm of his own.

Dorothy and Walt had been married in her hometown church by the same preacher who had married Mamma and Dorothy's father, and baptized Dorothy and buried Gram. Dorothy had not come home in three years since the wedding fearing that she would be further locked into the family cycle of birth-baptism-marriage-death all within a ten mile radius of the house. Mamma had been to New York

to visit Dorothy and Walt, but Dorothy had not been back to North Carolina, to the house, insisting that she and Walt could not fit the trip into their schedules, though the truth was that Dorothy only brought it up when she knew Walt had a business conflict. Yet this time was different: Walt had wanted to come, but Dorothy had insisted that she had to see Mamma alone before the baby was born. Though Walt was not thrilled with the idea of Dorothy riding the train alone, especially since she was pregnant, he finally agreed to the trip and made arrangements to fly down in time for Thanksgiving so Dorothy would not have to make the trip back alone.

Dorothy knew there was more behind her reasons for not coming home than schedules. Perhaps it was the big argument she and Mamma had had when Dorothy moved out to go to college, or maybe it was the name thing, or the house. Maybe it was a hundred other reasons. But Dorothy was independent, young and headstrong. At that time she thought the house would always be there, and so would Mamma, if Dorothy ever felt she wanted to come back - and Dorothy was sure she would never want to.

That house had been the horror of Dorothy's adolescent years. It was big enough, sure, but it was on the outskirts of town, cut off from what might as well have been civilization itself as far as Dorothy was concerned. There were no stores, no soda fountains or Hardee's anywhere within walking distance, and worst of all, no neighborhood children to play with. Dorothy considered seclusion to be the house's strongest weapon in holding her captive; that, combined with the fact that the house was filled with shadows and creaking noises at night with which to punish her if she failed to escape and was forced to return were the reasons Dorothy claimed for not trying to outright run away. So Dorothy turned her thoughts inward and endured her childhood by creating make-believe characters in adventurous situations and mysterious places. Most of the time the heroines were being held captive in some dreadful cave or castle. But in spite of the house, life had gone on. Dorothy laughed to herself now as she thought about those days she had spent writing escape scenes, planning to blow up the house as if it were the enemy, and alive.

In its day, the house had been a show place. But Mamma had not been able to keep it painted and in good repair while she was nursing Gram and supporting Dorothy, so she had put off all but the necessary repairs like plumbing and leaks in the roof. Dorothy rarely had friends over from school, because of her embarrassment over her home and Mamma's "dumb" questions which Dorothy was certain annoyed her friends. Dorothy would roll her eyes as Mamma would interrogate each new visitor as to who her parents were and what she was interested in studying. Dorothy tried to be patient with Mamma; but mainly she looked forward to graduating from high school - to escaping.

Once she had made it through college, Dorothy began to have some of her early stories published in magazines. It was then that she realized that she would never escape from Mamma or the house because they always appeared in some form in the stories and novels whose profits were now subsidizing her low-paying substitute-teaching jobs. Through the years, Dorothy had continued to write Mamma. Now she also sent home money to improve the house and for Mamma to buy new dresses; she still felt a sense of obligation, for she was in a way, still living off Mamma indirectly. Her experiences with Mamma living in that house served as Dorothy's impetus in her writing. Sending money home was, for Dorothy, a subconscious attempt to buy her freedom, and it also made her feel better about ignoring Mamma for so long.

The cab pulled up in front the house and came to a smooth stop. The driver got out and spit brown juice on the pavement before opening the door

for Dorothy. Clumsily, she climbed out of the taxi while the driver got the bags out of the trunk and carried them to the porch. Dorothy looked around at the new houses whose architectural designs had spoiled the visual effect of the old neighborhood. The driver returned to the street and Dorothy absently handed him a ten dollar bill, "Keep the change." The driver made his thanks hastily and jumped into the cab before Dorothy could change her mind about the tip. And the taxi pulled away, but not before the driver had another chance to spit.

Dorothy watched the cab speed away; only after it had turned the corner, did she hesistantly trun to face the house. The dogwoods whose pink blossoms had canopied the front yard in the spring when Dorothy had last been home, stood gnarled and bare, pasted against the blue, cloudless sky. Someone's tired old bassett hound slept under a box bush while a flock of small black starlings perched on the telephone wires in animated conversations of their own. Dorothy breathed deeply, sensing the familiar odor of coal in the air, an odor which had always signalled to her the season of high school football games and church hay rides. She stood for a long moment looking at the house; it was the same two-story brick and wooden structure it had always been ever since it was constructed in the 1930's -- not that Dorothy had expected it to be magically transformed into a palace or anything else, as she used to fantasize in her childhood. The entire building had been painted white years ago and was chipped and peeling from decades of stormy winters; the green shutters hung crooked on the rusted hinges. Standing on the front walk, Dorothy was astonished at the beauty of the old house in the autumn afternoon sun. She felt as though she had never really looked at the house before. Suddenly the house had character and strength, an enduring quality that even Dorothy could not express.

With one palm spread across her itching belly and the other supporting the aching curve of her lower back, Dorothy walked up the shifting concrete steps and noticed the big pot of red geraniums on the second step, wondering how much longer it would be until the frost would kill the blossoms.

The front porch swing rocked gently with the breeze prompting Dorothy to recall a time on a similar afternoon almost fourteen years earlier when she and Mamma had been sitting on the swing. Mamma had tried to teach Dorothy to knit that day. "Would you like to try this, Dotty Jane?" Dorothy had taken the white yarn and needles in her awkward hands and managed only to succeed in making a big knot in the middle of what was supposed to be a snow flake. Frustrated, she thrust the mass of tangled yarn back at her mother.

"Knitting's for old ladies and old maids, Ma. I don't plan on being either." Almost defiantly Dorothy jumped off the swing and ran inside. Mamma had shrugged off the careless insult and had continued to knit Dorothy's third sweater that fall.

Dorothy had thought of Mamma a lot recently as her still clumsy fingers tangled the yarn in her futile attempt at knitting pink booties. Pink booties; Mamma must have knitted dozens for Dorothy, and because of her own stubbornness Dorothy would not be able to make one pair for her own daughter. "A daughter," Dorothy thought to herself; wasn't it Aunt Liza who used to tell Mamma how lucky she was to have a daughter?

There's nothing like a daughter, Jane," Aunt Liza had said time and agian. "A daughter will take care of you when you need her like a son never would." Aunt Liza had only sons so her views were probably a case of the grass being greener on the other side.

"Fine job I've done," thought Dorothy as she pushed the doorbell, noticing

the cresent moon on the button for the first time. Had she ever even rung the doorbell before? Hearing the bell chime, she wondered if Mamma had ever gotten the old clock that the bell was a part of fixed after all these years. It had been reading 5:06 ever since Dorothy had been in the sixth grade. But it was a pretty wall piece, a miniature grandfather clock, and it chimed in a beautiful resonant tone.

Dorothy waited a few moments before she figured that Mamma must be out back. So she slowly descended the steps and left her bags on the porch. The air felt cool and dry. She had forgotten how much she always loved autumn in North Carolina. As her feet scattered the brown crackling sycamore leaves, Dorothy anticipated what her reunion with Mamma would be like. She wondered if they would laugh about all of the silly things that had happened between them so long ago. Probably they would never get around to apologies; she figured both of them were too proud to admit errors or hurt feelings.

As she turned the corner Dorothy saw Mamma bent over a pile of leaves as she pushed them in to a big green plastic bag, her hands encased in gardening gloves. Dorothy had never realized how old and fragile Mamma actually was. She hadn't remembered Mamma as being so short either, though it could have just been that her bones had settled in the last few years. Dorothy stopped and massaged the small of her back as Mamma stood up taking off her gloves and pulling the tail of her shirt over her rounded hips. Dorothy noticed that her mother had lost little weight since their last meeting. A long strand of frosty grey hair fell across her cheek and Mamma wiped it away with her boney fingers. She still wore her old wedding bank from Dorothy's father.

Having finished her yard work, Mamma turned toward the house and saw Dorothy standing by the back corner of the house. Neither of them spoke at first, they just stood there facing each other. For one real second Dorothy felt her eyes burn as she forced back tears. Mamma's dull grey eyes glistened with life and Dorothy was drawn into them, wondering why she had fought Mamma for so long. What about this little old woman had so repulsed Dorothy as a child? (Even the daughter could not say though she realized instantly that she now felt no comtempt for this person who was her mother.) Dorothy had realized before she'd ever gotten on the train to come home that Mamma had done the best she could to give Dorothy everything she had needed and had gotten not even a thanks in return. Looking at Mamma, Dorothy could see that deep inside herself she had always been so much like Mamma and she always sould be. Mamma stood in the cold looking scared and vulnerable. She had anticipated Dorothy's visit, but was afraid to expect too much because she had been hurt so many times before. She wanted to tell Dorothy what being a mother was all about and how much Dorothy had always meant to her, in spite of her threats to her child, "Wait till you have a child of your own." Dorothy had always been a source of pride for Mamma - her one accomplishment, her creation.

"Dotty Jane," cooed Mamma.

"I've missed you, Mamma," Dorothy confessed in a shakey voice.

"I've been looking forward to your visit. I've got your room all fixed up. You look well," Mamma trailed off.

"So do you Mamma. Very well, in fact." Dorothy took a few steps toward her mother. "Your arthritis giving you any trouble lately, Mamma?"

"None I can't handle. Let's go inside to the kitchen where it's warm. I've got some bread in the oven."

"Okay, Mamma. That sounds fine." The two women started toward the back door as an old grey tabby cat scurried in front of them through the leaves with a kitten hanging by the scruff of its neck in her mouth.

"So how is Walt?" Mamma asked as she held the door for Dorothy.

"He's just fine. His work is keeping him busy though. He'll be up Tuesday in time for Thanksgiving. I'm working on a new novel but I'm not going to be able to finish it as soon as I had intended," Dorothy patted her stomach in a light hearted manner. Mamma almost reached out to touch her daughter's belly, but caught herself so that her hand only jerked; still her gesture caught Dorothy's eye. The two had not excahnged much physical contact over the years, and Dorothy was vaguely sorry now. She was sorry for the check on the spontaneity of her mother's gesture and for her own when she had wanted to hug Mamma on first sight. Instead, she had pictured how melodramatic the scene would have been and mentally edited the idea. But neither could expect all those years of reserve and unnecessary defensiveness to just wash away. "She's kicking. Would you like to feel it, Mamma?"

"Yes, are you sure you don't mind?" Mamma reached out slowly and placed her hand on Dorothy's pumpkin-shaped belly. A smile flickered on her lips for a second as she felt a soft thud from the other side of Dorothy's skin.

Dorothy pulled out a chair and sat at the kitchen table. Mamma checked on the bread, "Just about done; ten more minutes, I'd say."

"Smells good." The aroma of fresh bread had filled the room as Mamma had opened the oven door.

Mamma turned her attention to Dorothy's belly again when Dorothy scratched it. "Stretching sure itches, doesn't it? When's the baby due?"

"In two and a half months, give or take a week." Mamma nodded and pretended to be busy straightening up the canisters on the counter. Dorothy could sense her nervousness and wanted to make some sort of gesture which would neither put Mamma on the spot nor set herself up to be rejected. She wanted Mamma to know how much she needed her and loved her, but to put the thought into straightforward words would seem to lessen their significance. Besides, words never really say what you want them to anyway, she thought. Dorothy traced the strawberry design on the plastic table cloth. Mamma still loved strawberries. "Mamma," Dorothy said almost questioningly.

"Yes, Dear?"

"Would you teach me how to knit now?" Dorothy could see her mother's eyes tear up and redden, but Mamma was still proud and kept her composure.

"What would you like to knit, Dotty?"

"Pink booties for my baby."

"So you know it's a girl; don't you think that spoils the fun?"

"I don't know, Mamma. Walt and I are very excited about it though. We painted the nursery yellow, it's really pretty."

Mamma smiled with the thought of a dranddaughter and pulled her sweater close around her shoulders. "Have you decided on a name yet?"

"Nothing definite yet, but we've got several possibilities. I guess it depends on what she looks like." Dorothy smiled to herself and thought how she hoped the baby would have grey eyes like Mamma. "That's right, my precious," she said silently to her baby as it slowly turned over in Dorothy's womb, "You'll be Grandmother's name sake too. We'll call you Janie."

Jane Bryson Booth

FOR FRIEND

Sun peers through the dusty rain-stained window,
It blinds me and blinks the tears out of my wilted eyes.

The rocking chair squeaks with every rock and creates
a wisp of wind,
And I smell a smell which reminds me of the past.

The time when I sacrificed my every moment for friend,
Always in my mind, in my senses, in my experienced heart.

Firend is gone.

Ripped me of my faith in me.
My innocent branches have been blown down in a storm;
But I shall root again in Srping-

I will carry on.

Wendy Cox

LEARNING

"Why?"

Forty pounds of pure kinetic energy
packaged in a two and a half foot frame
Curiously asks.

"How?"

Big, inquisitive blue eyes
Attentively watch.

"Can I?"

Tiny, clumsy fingers
Carefully attempt.

"Is this it?"

A doubtful, delicate little face
Dubiously wonders.

"It is?!"

An estatic child and parent
Happily rejoice.

Kim Crumpler

GOODBYE, FOR NOW

Funny how right you are.
I read your letter
And saw the truth
Between the lines
As well as the words
Expressed.
It is a truth
I would prefer
Not to believe,
But I know I must.
My own little world
I constructed,
Placing you in it against your will.
For this
I apologize.
I wish things were different,
But its outcome
We designed.
Objective is a key word.
I should have
Entered it into my vocabulary sooner.
You have penetrated
My thick skull,
And I shall miss
The warm thoughts of you
That escaped during the penetration.
Take care,
Friend.
I still love you
Because as I said,
I don't say
It,
Unless I mean it.
I meant it then,
And I mean it now.
But I understand,
And hope and pray
That one day,
We will be the
Friends
We once were
In May and June.
My heartfelt wishes
I send to you,
As support
And as a
Goodbye,
For now.

Audrey Ward

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